

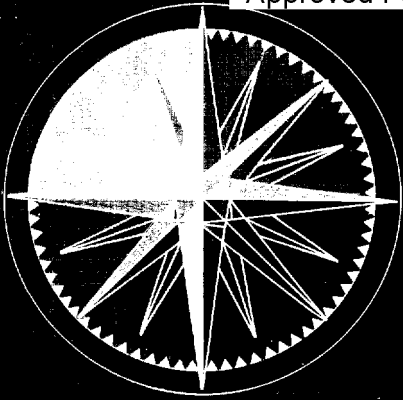
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# SPECIAL REPORT

EASTERN EUROPEAN REACTION TO US "BRIDGE-BUILDING" POLICY

State Dept. review  
completed

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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**EASTERN EUROPEAN REACTION TO US "BRIDGE-BUILDING" POLICY**

In the year since President Johnson enunciated the US desire to work for better relations with the countries of Eastern Europe--the "bridge-building" policy--the attitudes of several of those states toward the US have softened in varying degrees. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania, recognizing the present and potential benefits of improved relations with the US, have taken new initiatives to promote greater contact and have gone forward with moves which were in train even before the President's announcement.

This trend has in general not been seriously impaired by the Vietnam situation, and the reactions of several of the regimes to US bombings in North Vietnam have in fact been somewhat tempered by an apparent concern to see bridge building continue. In some instances, they have even tried to influence the USSR to avoid overly bellicose reactions to various international developments involving the US.

Albania and Bulgaria were hostile to the US initiative from the beginning, and there has been no perceptible change in their attitudes subsequently.

East Germany, to which the bridge-building policy does not apply, has also criticized it.

Rumania

Intent upon expanding its Western contacts--a necessary counterpart to its policy of establishing an independent course within the Communist camp--Rumania has been the most active of the Eastern European countries interested in improving relations with the US. Rumania's activities have brought about a marked improvement in bilateral government relations. They have also resulted in increased cultural contacts and the opening of consular talks. The most significant new development has been the increase in contacts

leading to negotiations with private US firms.

Bucharest has tried to improve the atmosphere for these negotiations by keeping to a minimum propaganda and agitation critical of the US. Last January, for example, to the detriment of its relations with Havana, the regime banned an anti-US demonstration by Cuban students in Bucharest. It also refrained for many months from any comment at all on US actions in Vietnam.

This positive trend, however, suffered at least a temporary

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**PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S PROPOSAL**

"The nations of Eastern Europe are beginning to reassert their own identity. There is no longer a single Iron Curtain. There are many. Each differs in strength and thickness, in the light that can pass through it and the hopes that can prosper behind it....

"We will continue to build bridges across the gulf which has divided us from Eastern Europe. They will be bridges of increased trade, of ideas, of visitors and of humanitarian aid."

**SELECTED EASTERN EUROPEAN REACTIONS**

Czechoslovakia: "We evaluate Johnson's policy of building bridges without illusions. Compared with the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of liberation, which was considered the main form of the fight against Socialism, it represents certain progress. However, even this policy is not able to see the world as it really is. In spite of this, Johnson's policy has certain aspects which are acceptable to us. These, for instance, include the idea of technical cooperation, trade expansion, cultural exchanges.... It is not our fault that all this has not yet been implemented. We did not conceive the cold war policy, embargo, liberation, and many other measures thought out by the US Government."

Hungary: "The Hungarian Government continues to believe that peaceful coexistence and normal diplomatic relations are necessary, and it is possible to establish links in trade, cultural, and other spheres between Socialist countries and Western countries....

"Our standpoint, intention, and endeavor are this: normal, and even good, relations must be established, at some future date, between the United States and the Hungarian People's Republic...but...it would be illusory and inconceivable to think that while aggression is being carried on in Vietnam, peaceful coexistence could develop satisfactorily in other areas of the world."

Poland: "The US, overlooking the difference in social systems and the affiliation of any camp, would like to establish bridges of mutually advantageous agreements free from political conditions, widely develop trade exchange and economic cooperation and scientific and cultural relations, and, in this way, on the basis of real interests, ease contradictions and tension and create mutual trust. Such a view, although it is suitable for concrete negotiations, does not, however, resolve the main problem. The main question in the elimination of the threat to peace is the problem of collective security."

**SOVIET COMMENTS**

"No few leaders in the West like to regard any step of a Socialist country toward improving relations with capitalist states...as a willingness to play the part of a 'bridge' between Eastern and Western Europe....

"Imperialist diplomacy is making new maneuvers under the fine-sounding slogans of 'improving' relations with the East, extending economic ties, etc. It seems they are eager to exploit some of the difficulties and differences in relations between individual countries of the world Socialist system...and to try to sow mistrust between the fraternal countries....

"In its relations with the outside world a Socialist country cannot strive to utilize its ties with capitalist countries to the detriment of other Socialist states."

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setback in April when the Firestone Rubber Company reversed its decision to sell Rumania a synthetic rubber complex--the main item in the shopping list which Bucharest presented to the US last year. Delays in various other commercial deals with US firms had already caused Rumania to cancel at least one purchase, but the cancellation of the Firestone contract--which was ready for signing after long negotiation--precipitated sharp criticism of the US. It also provoked indefinite postponement of scheduled trips to the US by two Rumanian delegations and suspension of the consular talks. The regime also began permitting stronger anti-US commentary regarding US actions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

Nevertheless, developments since last spring indicate that Rumanian interest in contacts with the US is apparently stronger than the dissatisfaction caused by the US actions. Rumania has edged back toward its former cooperative policy--albeit with a new cautiousness. Regime officials rapidly dispersed a crowd of anti-US demonstrators as recently as 6 May. There was also a brief lull in anti-US propaganda over Vietnam, although this has again increased.

Czechoslovakia

With de-Stalinization and the re-examination and subsequent reorganization of the economy in Czechoslovakia, a policy of improved relations with the West gradually gained acceptance

in the Prague regime in 1964. Although opposition within the party was and continues to be strong, there have been numerous Czech initiatives for improved relations with the US, particularly since the bridge-building proposal.

These initiatives have included measures to facilitate tourism in both directions, the release and return of US citizens held in Czech prisons, and guarantees of safety for visiting Americans. Contacts with private US firms have increased, climaxed by an official tour of the US by the president of the Czechoslovak Chamber of Commerce last spring, and there has been marked improvement in the treatment accorded US officials and visitors in Czechoslovakia.

In an effort to convey its interest in bridge building and in an improvement in relations the regime has even drawn attention to Czechoslovakia's new independence vis-a-vis Moscow.

As in the case of Rumania, however, difficulties have arisen. The last-minute refusal of the US to conclude the ten-year-old negotiations for a financial claims settlement, which Prague had at least unofficially indicated would be an indispensable step in expanding relations, was followed by a cooling of relations. Prague launched an anti-US campaign in the press and severely criticized US policy.

Discouraged by the collapse of the claims negotiations Prague now is concentrating on

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## USA ABROAD



Wife of Hungarian leader Kadar opening first official US exhibit at Budapest trade fair, May 1965.



US exhibit at Brno trade fair in Czechoslovakia, August 1964.



US graphics exhibit in Warsaw, March 1965.



US ambassador this year for first time attracted crowds and official attention when he laid wreath on US monument in western Bohemia on anniversary of Czechoslovak liberation.



Supermarkets or "self services" recently built in Budapest and Bucharest reflecting increasing attraction of things American.

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obtaining most-favored-nation status and, for this purpose, has gradually returned to a more conciliatory attitude toward the US. Although the sharp anti-US propaganda campaign over Vietnam continues--with occasional attacks on President Johnson personally--the regime has permitted no demonstrations against the US Embassy and, as recently as early July, referred somewhat favorably to the bridge-building policy.

Poland and Hungary

President Johnson's proposal came at a time when Poland and Hungary were attempting to reverse the deterioration in their relations with Washington. Developments in Vietnam interfered with the improvement which first followed the President's policy statement, but do not appear to have seriously affected Polish and Hungarian cultural and economic relations with the US.

Both countries are still conducting virulent anti-US campaigns on the Vietnam issue, but the Poles have stringently controlled anti-US demonstrations. The Hungarians blame Soviet pressure for the one violent demonstration permitted against the US Legation in Budapest last February. Hungary's interest in opening and developing contacts was indicated by Budapest's prompt reporting of Senator Ful-

bright's recent statements about US domestic obstacles to the bridge-building policy.

Political tensions arising out of the Vietnam situation now appear to be the only serious obstacle to progress for the Hungarians. Poland, too, has indicated that a serious deterioration of the "special relationship" it established with the US in 1957 may result from further escalation of the Vietnam war.

Albania and Bulgaria

Unlike the rest of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria has ignored the President's initiative. Fear and suspicion underlie Sofia's attitude. The regime has continued its efforts to block US access to the Bulgarian population, and it has held cultural contacts to a mere trickle. The US Legation has been subjected to harassment and numerous demonstrations. There is little likelihood that the situation will improve in the near future because of strong opposition within the Bulgarian party to any rapprochement. Bulgaria is nonetheless interested in obtaining most-favored-nation status with the US and considers improved trade relations the minimum prerequisite to the improvement of political and cultural relations.

Albania has strongly denounced US policy and there is

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little likelihood that it will change its position so long as it remains Communist China's close ally.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia's position with respect to the US differs markedly from those of its East European neighbors. Belgrade has a history of contact and relatively good relations with the US and of genuine independence from the Soviet Union. US relations with the rest of Eastern Europe are perhaps now much like those with Yugoslavia in the early 1950s. The pattern of US-Yugoslav relations as they have developed for the past 15 years may in fact be the model of what can be expected in US dealings with the other Eastern European states.

Despite numerous ups and downs in Yugoslav-US relations, which definitely cooled after 1960, the atmosphere at the moment is relatively good. A steady drumfire of anti-US foreign policy statements emanates from Belgrade, but the basis for

a steady trend toward closer ties appears to remain solid.

Prospects

Those Eastern European countries which reacted positively to the President's proposal have also been moving toward an expansion of contacts with the West in general. Their relations with Western Europe have improved more rapidly than with the US, in part because of historical ties and understanding, and have resulted in many cases in significant agreements. The Vietnam situation has had little or no effect on this steady growth in East-West European understanding. It appears that only a Soviet clampdown, which does not seem likely and would not necessarily be effective, could arrest the process.

These countries are, by and large, most interested in the economic aspects of bridge building, and probably will remain so for some time to come. They are interested in the cultural-social aspects only secondarily. Political effects will be only by-products of the bridge-building policy.

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